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EDITORIAL NOTES

The only kind of activity that has any educational value is that which yields a tangible result in some worthy product.

Educative Activity

The ordinary distinction drawn between the activity of play and the activity of work has neither meaning nor value in terms of growth. Both play and work may be good or bad, educative or otherwise; that depends alone upon the motive. The infallible test is found in the character of the output; it is a measure that anyone may apply with ease and directness when education is conceived to be a concern of the familiar things of life.

An educational activity, therefore, is one which expresses itself through some helpful work. This is not a machine-made definition—it depends upon the nature of things.

Lazy Children

It is rooted in the fact that every child is a born worker and a lover of work. To work, to do things, to bring about results, useful and beautiful, is just as natural as it is for him to breathe the air. There are no lazy children—naturally. Catch them young and treat them right, and they are all workers and lovers of work. A lazy boy is merely either one who is sick, or one who does not like to do something which a “grown-up” thinks he should do; his indisposition, if not a matter for the physician, should be placed to his credit. A big boy came to my office one day who was too lazy, the teacher said, to be allowed to remain in school. I asked him what he would like to do if he were left entirely free to choose, and he replied: “I would quit school and go to work!” I thanked him—inwardly—for his criticism, over which I have since deeply pondered. Doubtless the “work” which this boy would be able to pick up in the streets would be as little to his taste as were the tasks left behind in the school. For the average employer rarely considers the soul-life of the employed. So between the teachers who do not know enough and the business men who do not care enough the lazy boys are easily turned

into the path of the transgressor. Laziness is the merciful invention of nature, whereby she holds them for a time at the parting of the ways, and enables them, during this period of wavering, to escape the stupidity of the schools on the one hand, and the heart-breaking conditions of business on the other.

It was a bad day for education when it got itself placed over against work; when it made work a penalty for the stupid and a punishment for the perverse who would not become "educated"—and education is just finding out its colossal blunder. Figures from the fourth grade up show that, when it is solely a question of school *or* work, it is work that wins the contest, hands down. Of the hosts that enter the primary grade, practically all the children of all the people, by far too small a per cent. finish the eighth year; of these a still lesser per cent. go to the high school, and beyond this there is scarcely more than a negligible minority. This absorption of child-life by the world's work all takes place in the face of modern educational theory, our advanced views of culture, our legal enactments, and the truant officer!

The forsakenness of the schools is due in part to the bread-winning necessities of the family; but the deepest cause lies in the attitude of the pupils toward what the schools now offer them. The children themselves are the most persistent enemies of the child-labor law. They all seem to have it reckoned up by the almanac just when they will be permitted to get a real job. That day is a prouder one and probably more significant to the boy than the one that gives him a vote. To gratify his ambition for accomplishment, he gladly leaves school to subject himself to long hours and often to much physical discomfort, in order that he may bring forth something tangible as the result of his own hand and brain. Of course, in the majority of cases he is grossly self-deceived and buncoed. Neither the school nor the home has given him any adequate opportunity to learn what his real earning power is, and neither has taught him how this compares with the actual cost of self-maintenance. He is apt, therefore, to overestimate the one and to underestimate the other—he is self-deceived. He

has more than even chances of finding a place with a man who wants to extract more gold from wood and stone and iron and dry goods and groceries than nature has put into them, and he therefore tries to make up the deficit out of the boy. The latter, discovering the bunco, suddenly loses his taste for work and begins to reflect upon the fairy-stories which he heard while in school about benevolent old gentlemen who kindly give nice honest boys a chance to begin at the bottom—carefully concealing the conditions, however, which necessarily keep them there. The fable of the frog in the well which climbed up two feet in the daytime and slipped back three feet at night seems to point his own destiny, and the stammering schoolboy's conclusion as to where that frog was bound to land in less than a week no longer seems so funny.

The situation is scarcely improving. Better schoolhouses and equipment, more skilful teachers, and higher ideals have the same unequal struggle as of old, because the allurements of active life have, *pari passu*, also grown more numerous and tempting. The schools of the period offer little help in the solution of the child-labor problem, because they fail to recognize adequately the child's desire to work. On the contrary, they do much to thwart his love for it and thereby to transform him into a non-educable being.

The question above all others is this: Shall we permit the children to be driven by their irresistible instincts into the world of labor, immature and unprepared, where they will grow up under the starving and stultifying circumstances of the store, the factory, and the sweat-shop; or shall the school system be overhauled so that the inborn love of work may be gratified and fostered under normal and healthful conditions? To this there would seem to be but one answer: if work the children must, and, as the facts show, work they will, it is for the schools to provide the opportunities for it to be done under the highest educative conditions. The provisions for industrial occupations in the schools should be entirely comparable with the practical advantages of those found in the community at large which now lure the

children to disappointment and despair, and infinitely above them in their influence for good upon physical, mental, and moral growth. In such an educational process all industrial reforms must have their roots.

It is difficult for people, generally, to understand that labor has anything to do with education; it is merely a means to a livelihood—a source of income—a road to money and wealth. Those who favor trade schools usually have in mind the *laborer* and not the *educated* man. Manual training has been fought for a generation because people have feared it would turn out workers instead of thinkers! Scientific and technical schools with their laboratories and shops have done something to dispel the illusion—although the S.B. degree is still hardly considered to be on the same scholastic level with its aristocratic neighbor A.B. A generation or two ago there were thought to be no educated men outside of the “three learned professions;” now we know there are legions of them. The conviction is growing slowly that there is a relation between labor and education, and in another generation we shall believe that they are inseparable. We shall have not only education for labor, but also labor for education.

Labor as a means of education is rather a new idea, but it is a sound one. It may be, or it may not be, necessary for children to help support the family, but they should always have a chance to do something to support themselves, and the school should furnish, in part, the means. At no stage should education be wholly divorced from the question of self-support. Curiously enough, the validity of this principle has been established only in the best reform institutions and with the wayward class of children, most of whom have utterly repudiated the ordinary type of schools. We must put the occupations in the schools on such a footing that the children through their industrial and artistic instincts and ability may gradually acquire a correct notion of their own earning power. If the work of their hands and brains is *educative*, then *it has an objective value also*, either in the school, the home, or the open market; and it is due the pupils that *this value should be distinctly set over to their credit in terms of self-support*. It should be done in such

a way that the children themselves will fully understand, appreciate, and prize the worth of their own work. The occupations which should at first engage the children in school

Essential are those concerned in the establishment and the
School maintenance of the ideal home. The human home,
Industries so infinitely removed from the lair, is the very highest achievement of evolution. Individual worth, community life, and national welfare in a democracy will be forever determined by the qualities bred into personal character by the common home. Domestic economy, with its allied sciences and crafts, and the arts, and their relation to nature and history, must become more and more the dominant factors in early education; first, because the artistic and industrial instincts in childhood are commanding ones, and, second, because early and prolonged practical training in such subjects is essential to the upbuilding and the integrity of the home. The virtues of family life can never be overmagnified, can never be too deeply impressed upon the minds of the children. In these fundamental occupations

Boys and Girls the boys and girls should participate equally through-
and Industries out the period of elementary and secondary instruction. The strong tendency at present to consider the home-making side of life, in school and out of it, a matter for the girls alone is entirely wrong. A home of the right type is an impossibility unless the husband and wife are both practically acquainted with the details of its make-up and equally intelligent as to its mission. The boys, therefore, should scrub and bake and brew as a matter of daily routine, and as a matter of course, until they know better than they know anything else what it takes to make a home and what their duties are in the making. Home-making depends upon the character of the woman; it hangs no less upon the character of the man; with either alone it is a lonesome and hopeless task.

How shall we keep the boys off the street? Let them scrub the front steps and back porch, sweep the rooms, take care of the furnace, care for a garden be it ever so small,
A Question and keep chickens, sew on buttons, trim the lamps,
its Answer mow the lawn; give them a work-bench in the basement and elect them tinkers-in-chief to the household, and on

Saturdays let them earn their shoes as errand boys for druggist or grocer. There is plenty of time for all this besides an hour or so for play each day, and a half holiday, too, on Saturday. A boy with less work or more free time than this will find it hard to keep clear of trouble.

What "home work" should the schools require of children? Let them help get breakfast, wash the dishes, dust the furniture. put cupboards and drawers to rights, make the beds
Home Work and keep their rooms spick and span; let them
for the School talk over a few of the things that interest them in school, that they may start into the day's work with something of a purpose which the school can help them realize. It is only when we attain such vigorous action and reaction between the home and school that the educational process will become identical with the process of living.

W. S. J.